

"Regrets for leaving the 'zoo'?: Regret construction strategies in the online discourses of Nigerian migrants

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ABSTRACT

Regret, a cognitive phenomenon capable of revealing a person's disposition about certain realities, is conceived as a tool to unpack Nigerian migrants' perceptions about the country. This paper examines discourse strategies of regrets' construction in the online discourses of Nigerian migrants. The data consist of eighty-eight responses of Nigerian migrants downloaded from the NAIRALAND where many Nigerians in the diaspora expressed their regrets about leaving the country. These were subjected to qualitative-descriptive analysis, using van Dijk's (2007) model of discourse strategies. The findings uncover two forms of regrets constructed in the discourse: positive and negative. The positive regrets' construction characterizes "not leaving early" regrets; positive self-appraisal and negative representation of the country. Frustration experience in the foreign countries and juxtaposition of specific circumstances in Nigeria to contemporary experiences elsewhere frame negative regrets' construction. These were constructed through discourse strategies such as presupposition, implication, lexicalization, hyperbole, illustration, metaphor and disclaimer. These Nigerians' use of language in this discourse indexes hopelessness, visionless leaders, lawlessness and economic hardship. The study concludes that while the views of Nigerian migrants may not be true, perhaps, the government may urgently look into these views and act to convince other Nigerians to prevent the exodus of prospective Nigerian migrants which could lead to brain drain.

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1. Introduction

Extant studies on migration discourse in the context of Nigeria (Ikuteyijo 2019; Ayeomono 2011; Kupolati 2021; Nwaozuzu 2013; Obi-Ani et al. 2020) have focused on irregular migration as a survival strategy, cultural identity, language contact and the historical perspective of migration, to the exclusion of regrets' construction and the significant implications of such discourse as it relates to the Nigerian context. Migrants usually have different experiences which could be favourable and unfavourable. These myriad experiences reflect in the way they construct regret. Regret, an expression of sadness about a dissatisfactory experience beyond one's control and that one wished it had not happened, is a cognitive phenomenon capable of revealing a person's disposition about certain realities. Nigerian migrants' regrets construction is significant to unpack their perception about the country in their use of language. This is because language is a veritable tool to investigate perceptions, assumptions and beliefs of people in various discourses.

Nigeria is endowed with both human and material resources which if appropriately utilized will not only develop the country to make life comfortable for the citizens and make it a centre of attraction to citizens of other countries but also boost the country's international reputation and foreign policy. One then wonders why many Nigerian youths are leaving the country. Validating the assertion that many Nigerian youths are interested in migrating to other countries for economic reasons, the World Bank, in a study titled "Of Roads Less Traveled: Assessing the Potential for Migration to Provide Overseas Jobs for Nigeria's Youths" published by Ripples Nigeria on the 24th of July, 2021, states that "With rising migratory pressure created by poor employment conditions, Nigerians are increasingly choosing to migrate through irregular means.

Surprisingly, most of these Nigerian youths, after migrating to another country by whatever means, strategically construct a series of regrets in their discourses, especially in online social media where sympathizers will be gathered and the international audience will be privy to Nigerians' experience that propels them to always opt for migration choice. As such, these Nigerian migrants deploy certain strategies to construct regrets in their online discourses. This study, therefore, investigates the regrets construction of Nigerian migrants by examining different forms of regrets expressed and discourse strategies deployed in constructing these regrets in their online discourses. It is expected that this scholarly attempt will be a valuable addition to studies in migration discourse and partly political discourse within the purview of linguistics scholarship, particularly in the context of Nigeria.

1.1. Studies on migration discourse

Many scholarly works all over the world have interrogated migration issues from different perspectives (Fina 2003; Prieto 2004; Guillem 2015; Eberl et al. 2018; Obi-Ani et al. 2020; Viola and Verheul 2020; de Haas 2021; de Haas 2016; among others). Migration discourse has been researched from the angle of its historical evolution (Viola and Verheul 2020), media representation of migrants (Prieto 2004; Eberl et al. 2018; Marques and Ramos 2020), politics and migration (Heidenreich and Eberl 2020) and migration and identity construction (Li et al. 1995; Fina 2003).

Among the limited number of scholarly studies on migration issues in the Nigerian context, the focus has been on: cultural identity (Ayeomoni, 2011, Kupolati, 2021); language contact (Nwaozuzu, 2013) and historical perspective of the phenomenon (Obi-Ani et al. 2020), almost to the exclusion of discourse strategies for regrets construction in Nigerian migrants online discourses, especially as the migration resulted from bad leadership and governance in Nigeria. Ramos and Marques' (2020) study has a related focus as it identifies strategies (quantification of occurrences, categorization of the discourse object as "refugee", categorization and quantification etc.) for discursive construction of migrants' images in contrast to Europe in opinion texts which was published in Portuguese newspapers during an intense period of media coverage of the phenomenon between September and October 2015.

Despite the area of the link between Marques and Ramos' (2020) study and the present study, this particular study is significantly different in that it relates specifically to the Nigerian situation. Considering the interconnection between politics and migration, Heidenreich and Eberl (2020) analyse migration discourses in the Facebook accounts of political actors across six European countries and they present new insights into the visibility of migration as a topic and sentiment about migration, revealing country and party-specific patterns. Another major gap in Heidenreich and Eberl's work is that it does not concern itself with strategies for regrets construction. In connection with how Nigerian politics and leadership affect the migration of Nigerians, Yagboyaju and Akinola (2019), and Okoi and Iwara (2021) opine that the Nigerian state has failed in three important areas which include: security of lives and properties; promotion of the rule of law and provision of visionary leadership. Owing to this, it is concluded that Nigeria lacks the capacity for effective governance, and to solve this problem, Nigeria requires an aristocratic system of governance that is founded on the pedigree of political leaders and the education of its voters. This bad system in Nigerian governance is what Flahaux and de Haas (2016) term as the driver of the aggressive migration of people from Nigeria.

A lot of Nigerians, especially youths who are desperate to have economic liberation and who believe they cannot achieve that goal in Nigeria, opt for the choice of migrating to another country, expressing their regrets in various forms in their online discourses. This study will therefore be situated as a hybrid within the scholarship of political discourse and migration discourse, to identify and classify different types of regrets expressed by Nigerian migrants in online discourses together with the ideologies behind these regrets for enlightening potential Nigerian migrants on what they are likely to regret when they migrate and to help them take relatively appropriate decisions in their migration plans.

1.2. Theoretical insights

The study draws insight from van Dijk's (2007) discourse strategies which he developed as devices for the construction of ideologies. It is pertinent to note that the focus of the present study is not on ideology; however, some of these strategies are suitable to foreground the linguistic devices with which Nigerian migrants construct regrets in their online discourses. van Dijk, in this model, explores racism and ideology in the migration discourse; which shares similarities with the data set of this study. In the model, he discusses two main discursive strategies which are positive self-representation (semantic macro-strategy of in-group favouritism) and negative other-representation (semantic macro strategy of derogation of out-group) which are realized through discursive moves such as actor description, authority, burden, categorization, comparison, consensus, counterfactuals, disclaimer, euphemism, evidentiality, illustration, generalization, implication, irony, lexicalization, metaphor, nation self-glorification, norm expression, number game, polarization, US-Them, populism, presupposition, vagueness and victimization.

Only six of the aforementioned which are relevant to achieve the aim of the study are adopted. They are burden, lexicalization, implication and presupposition, hyperbole, disclaimer, illustration. According to van Dijk (2007:63) burden is conceived as arguments that represent premises that are taken for granted, as self-evident and as sufficient reasons to accept the conclusion. Nigerian migrants use this strategy to express their frustrating experiences and regrets. Disclaimer strategy describes the act of face-saving by mentioning positive characteristics but then focusing rather exclusively on the negative attributes of the other side (p. 67). Some of the migrants deploy this strategy in expressing certain feelings or conditions they miss in Nigeria but their focus is more on the negative features of the country; hence, they express positive regret. The illustration is a powerful strategy of making more plausible a general point defended by the speaker, emanating from his episodic memory as impelling forms of empirical proof.

Lexicalization is conceived as the expression of lexical items creating an overall attitudinal strategy for negative portrayal of one's country based on the speaker's opinion within a specific context. With this strategy, Nigerian migrants project the country in derogatory names to justify their construction of positive regrets. Hyperbole as a strategy is conceived as a semantic rhetorical device for propagating and overstating meaning by using special metaphors in portraying one's nation in a bad light in the course of constructing regret. Significantly, this strategy is hugely deployed by Nigerian migrants in their construction of regrets about Nigeria. In describing presupposition, van Dijk merges implication and presupposition as a strategy that refers to the fact that shared knowledge is generally presupposed in the discourse which is not explicitly expressed. As such, certain implications of knowledge that do not serve the interest of the speaker may remain implicit or hidden. In sum, this evaluative model is designed to deliberately capture various ways Nigerian migrants construct regrets about leaving the country vis-à-vis the foreign countries.

2. Method

The data for this study consist of eighty-eight posts and comments of diasporic Nigerians on *NAIRALAND*. *NAIRALAND* is a Nigerian English-language Internet forum (blog) that was created by a Nigerian, Seun Osewa and the forum is dominated by Nigerians both home and abroad. So, discourses of a substantial number of Nigerians in the diaspora are available in the forum. The responses of Nigerian migrants expressing regrets were purposively collected from the stated source with the following link: <https://www.nairaland.com/5696586/what-regrets-leaving-nigeria>. The selection of the data was because they reflect both positive and negative regrets which are the concerns of this study. Though the study's focus is not on ideologies, the study draws insight from van Dijk's (2007) strategies which he developed as devices for the construction of ideologies. Six of the strategies (burden, lexicalization, implication and presupposition, hyperbole, disclaimer, illustration) which are suitable to foreground the linguistic devices with which Nigerian migrants construct regrets in their online discourses were adopted for the analysis of data. This evaluative model is adopted to capture various ways Nigerian migrants construct regrets (positively and negatively) about leaving their country for foreign countries.

3. Results

Two forms of regrets' construction are identified by Nigerian migrants in the sampled data. They are positive and negative regrets. The constructions represent two groups: 1. those in the diaspora who express positive regret for leaving Nigeria; to such people, chief of their regrets is, not leaving early enough; 2. Those who left Nigeria and had to return; their main regret is, coming back to Nigeria.

3.1. Positive Regrets Construction

Positive regrets construction is conceived as a cognitive phenomenon, a way of expressing a truth eloquently asserted as relief over dissatisfaction experiences. In the context of this study, it relates to how Nigerian migrants linguistically express their dissatisfaction and misgivings' experiences in Nigeria in form of relief now that they left the country. Constructions in this perspective capture regrets for not leaving the country early and positive self-appraisal versus the negative representation of the country. These are discussed in turns with strategies involved.

a. Not leaving early regret construction

Given that regrets' construction entails a significant degree of cognitive appraisal and critical judgment over one's actions, Nigerian migrants in this connection express regrets for not leaving the country earlier than they did. In this way, they positively express their unfavourable experiences. This is exemplified below.

Excerpt 1

no money.....no helper.....no outside connection to move
535 Likes 36 Shares

Re: What Are Your Regrets For Leaving Nigeria? by justwise(m): 7:04am On Feb 20, 2020

My only regret is not leaving earlier.
844 Likes 70 Shares

When people regret their actions, they are likely to feel that they would have done something differently probably to have avoided the regret, thus Connolly and Zeelenberg (2002) argue that self-blame is a component of regret. Following this assertion, Nigerian migrants resort to self-blame for not having left Nigeria earlier than they did. The excerpt reflects the construction of positive regrets through the strategy of implicature and presupposition. The word *only* in the excerpt is an indication of conventional implicature that the migrants do not have any other regret for leaving Nigeria. The regret constructed in the excerpt is positive because the migrants do not regret leaving Nigeria but express regret for not leaving the country earlier than they did. The excerpt also implies that these migrants prefer abroad to Nigeria. The conventional implicature in the discourse is indexed with the use of the word *earlier*. The implicature is that the migrants left Nigeria later than they would have wished.

Excerpt 2

Re: What Are Your Regrets For Leaving Nigeria? by Kenn55: 4:23pm On Feb 20, 2020

My greatest regret was not leaving earlier. What was i even thinking?
38 Likes 1 Share

Re: What Are Your Regrets For Leaving Nigeria? by lordally(m): 5:39pm On Feb 20, 2020

The excerpt above reflects conventional implicature indexed by the word *greatest* which implicates that the migrants have more forms of regrets but the greatest of them is, not leaving Nigeria earlier. The regret constructed is positive because the migrants do not regret leaving Nigeria but their regret is, not to have left before they did. This presupposes that leaving Nigeria is a plus for the migrants. The adverb *earlier* indicates how probably, the migrants have been living favourably abroad within the shortest time of their relocation. The implicature is that the migrants left Nigeria later than they would have wished. Another index of positive regrets' construction is, *what was I even thinking?* It implies that one does not need to regret leaving Nigeria probably because life outside Nigeria is preferable which resultantly makes the migrants enjoy leaving Nigeria. After all, they desire a better life which indicatively has been made available to them abroad.

b. Positive self-appraisal versus the negative representation of Nigeria

This describes how Nigerian migrants construct their regrets by articulating self-feelings in their favour (relief) and negatively describing the country through labelling. Through this, these migrants can evoke the sociopolitical realities of the country. These ideas are exemplified below.

Excerpt 3

Re: What Are Your Regrets For Leaving Nigeria? by Temple1288(m): 6:11pm On Feb 20, 2020



Regrets for leaving the Zoo??

You're funny!

Seeing people who reason like Human Beings will make you regret not leaving the British Game Reserve/Zoo earlier..

Modified: My only regret is that in no distant time, I'll be back permanently as customs and traditions demand. Ultimately 'AKA YA EBU OVO' shouldn't stay outside for too long.. It's really painful!

37 Likes 1 Share

Rose and Summerville (2005) submit that people's biggest regrets are a reflection of where they see their largest opportunities; that is, where they see tangible prospects for change, growth and renewal. This proposition can be likened to Nigerians seeing their largest opportunities abroad in terms of tangible prospects for change, growth and renewal and as result, begin to express their regrets for not having access to such opportunities in their home country. Using hyperbole to construct positive regret while negatively representing Nigeria, the migrants first ask a rhetorical question which is also an echo question thus: *Regrets for leaving the Zoo?* This implies that no one can regret leaving Nigeria characteristically because no country is as bad as Nigeria. The migrants derogatorily liken Nigeria to a zoo; which indicates that the country is run like an animal kingdom and that the people in the country behave and or reason like animals since it is animals that live in the zoo.

The excerpt presupposes that the migrants do not regret leaving Nigeria; rather they are happy to have left a "zoo-like" nation. The simple sentence, *You are funny!* clearly expresses a surprise that it should not be thought of that anyone would regret leaving Nigeria. While portraying Nigeria in a bad light in the course of constructing positive regrets that they enjoy leaving Nigeria, the migrants presuppose that Nigerians do not reason like human beings and that Nigeria is a British Game Reserve or zoo. Celebrating leaving the country, the migrants deploy specific lexical expressions which show their attitudinal perception. The overall attitude of the migrants is that Nigeria is not a place to live in but a place to leave.

Excerpt 4

Re: What Are Your Regrets For Leaving Nigeria? by ofiko123(m): 4:40pm On Feb 21, 2020

Nigeria is a shithole nation, there is no need to regret Leaving it....

3 Likes 1 Share

Migrants also construct positive regrets implicating that they do not regret leaving Nigeria by exaggerating how bad Nigeria is, portraying Nigeria in a bad light as a place not meant for human beings. They use direct metaphor to compare Nigeria with shithole, a place meant for excreta and body wastes. The presupposition in the excerpt is that there is nothing good about Nigeria which anyone can miss by leaving the country and that is why the migrants use the words: *there is no need....*

Excerpt 5



The migrants make use of sarcasm to metaphorically refer to Nigerian corrupt leaders as "snakes". To portray Nigerian leaders as those who can embezzle money and then engage in cover-up strategy by claiming that "snakes have swallowed the money", the migrants here evoke the memory of how public figures involved in financial crime in Nigeria sometimes ago claimed that snakes swallowed the money. Background information to this statement is the scenario that happened at the headquarters of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board in Abuja, Nigeria when a sectional leader of the Board was giving an account of missing public fund in 2017 and claimed that "snakes have swallowed the money" worth Millions of Naira. The migrants sarcastically express that the only thing they miss in the country is this kind of unheard-of news of snakes swallowing money. The expression is a way of euphemistically expressing that everything in Nigeria is bad and that they will miss nothing worthwhile about Nigeria. To further negatively portray Nigeria as a bad country and a place not meant for human beings but animals, the migrants give the following expressions: *I can't miss a zoo. No! I can't! Never! Animal kingdom!* In the quoted expressions, Nigeria is given two derogatory names - zoo and *Animal kingdom*. The strategy deployed by migrants here to construct positive regrets about their leaving Nigeria is lexicalization. They achieve this by giving expressions of lexical items to create an overall attitudinal strategy for negative portrayal of Nigeria implicatively to justify why they do not need to regret leaving Nigeria – indicating that they (human beings) do not need to live in a place meant for animals – zoo and animal kingdom. To give their overall opinion about Nigeria as being an extremely bad country that is not worth living in, they give the conclusion to reveal that they are not only happy that they have left Nigeria, they also pray not to return to the country. This opinion in form of conversational implicature is embedded in the following expression: *Be far from me!*

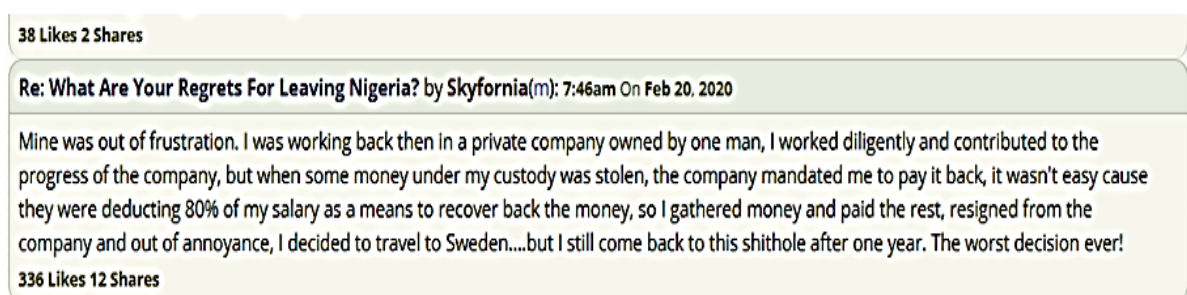
3.2 Negative Regrets Construction

Negative regret is constructed when an individual expresses feelings of sadness or sorrow about something beyond his control and wished it had not happened. It relates to a scenario that may warrant a person to express value judgment by comparing actions, situations or circumstances. In this context, Nigerian migrants construct regrets by expressing regrets over the painful return to Nigeria, the frustration experienced in the foreign countries, and juxtaposing specific circumstances in Nigeria to contemporary experiences elsewhere.

a. Returning to the country

This describes how Nigerian forced or willful deportees express their sorrow for returning to the country. Certain emotion types such as frustration, sorrow and grief are accentuated while constructing regrets in this manner. This is analysed with samples below.

Excerpt 6



Regret is an emotion that occurs when a person is thinking about how a current situation would have been better if a different decision had been taken (Pape and Martinez, 2017). In line with this submission, Nigerian migrants express their regrets about first leaving Nigeria and later returning to the country by implicating that it would have been better for them if they did not decide between returning to Nigeria. In an attempt to make their expression of regrets plausible, Nigerian migrants deploy illustration as a discourse strategy by going memory lane to narrate the story of what frustrated them to leave Nigeria and how they mistakenly decide to return to Nigeria after a while which they now regret. Apart from illustration as a strategy used, the migrants also use hyperbole as a strategy to express that they regret returning to Nigeria after "being lucky" to have left the country before.

They use metaphor to describe how bad Nigeria is by referring to the country as a *shithole*. The conversational implicature of this strategy can be interpreted to mean that Nigeria is so bad that anyone who returns to the country after first leaving should regret returning, implicatively projecting the country as the one not worth living in. Referring to this action as *the worst decision ever* could be interpreted as an overstatement because there might be other decisions worse than that. Describing it in a way that one will feel no other decision can be as worse as that, is the use of hyperbole meant to portray Nigeria in a bad light in the course of constructing their regrets.

b. Expensive services abroad vs. Affordable services in Nigeria

This reveals how Nigerian migrants express relatively positive feelings about their country when constructing regrets over certain services comparatively with their contemporary experiences in their foreign countries.

Excerpt 7

Yes I also miss those affordable services. Tailor, cobblers etc. I have some shirts to adjust, and I'm weary of going to tailors around here.

20 Likes

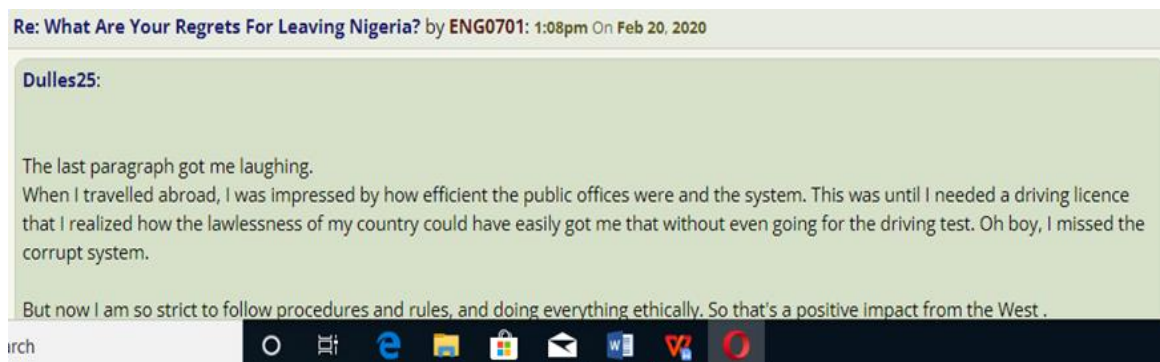
While constructing negative regrets for leaving Nigeria where services are relatively affordable for abroad where services are expensive, Nigerian migrants deploy the strategies of disclaimer, burden and illustration to achieve that purpose. Using disclaimer as a strategy, the migrants save Nigerian face by mentioning positive features about Nigeria that services in Nigeria are affordable when compared to services abroad. To optimally use disclaimer as a strategy, the migrants do not imply in their discourses that they intend to return to Nigeria where services are said to be affordable. This refusal to indicate the intention to return to Nigeria has conversational implicature that Nigeria is not seen by Nigerian migrants as a country to return to and that is negative about Nigeria. The burden is also used by Nigerian migrants as a strategy to express negative regrets about their leaving Nigeria. They use this strategy to represent promises that are taken for granted as self-evidence and as sufficient reasons to accept the conclusion. The expression: *Yes I miss those affordable services. Tailor, cobbler etc.* is a premise that is taken for granted as self-evidence and as sufficient reason to accept the conclusion that services are affordable in Nigeria when compared to services' affordability abroad.

To justify the plausibility of the assertion that services are affordable in Nigeria while it is expensive abroad, the migrants give illustration to support their claim by adding that: *I have some shirts to adjust and I'm wary of going to tailors around here.* The quoted excerpt narrates/illustrates the experience of the migrants as an impelling empirical proof to substantiate their claim that certain services are affordable in Nigeria compared to what obtains abroad while constructing negative regrets about leaving Nigeria.

c. Orderliness abroad vs. lawlessness in Nigeria, frustration and food items related regrets

In this context, Nigerian migrants express feelings of regret about forms of lawlessness they enjoy in Nigeria compared to the "difficulties" they experience in coping with orderliness in their foreign countries.

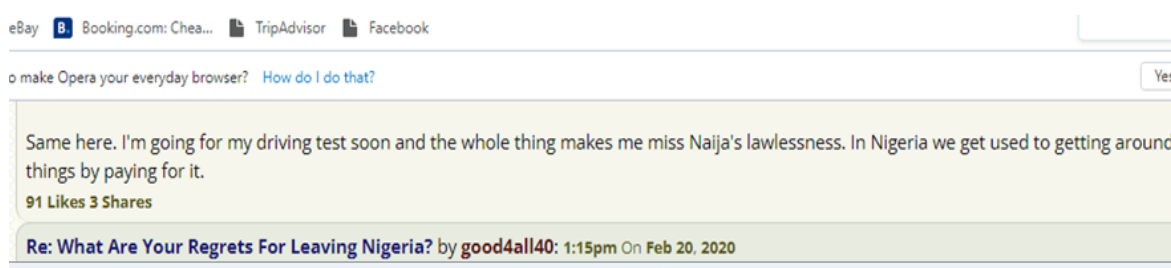
Excerpt 8



The construction of negative regrets by Nigerian migrants also includes that there is orderliness abroad while there is lawlessness in Nigeria. One of the strategies used to construct this form of regret is the disclaimer. Nigerian migrants deploy this strategy by expressing a positive feature abroad that things are done in order as against lawlessness in Nigeria. While expressing orderliness as a virtue abroad, they still regret not being part of the lawlessness in Nigeria. Another strategy used to construct regret in the area of orderliness abroad versus lawlessness in Nigeria is a burden. Nigerian migrants present a promise that is taken for granted as self-evidence and as a sufficient reason to accept the conclusion that Nigerians are corrupt and that things are not done orderly in Nigeria - ... *I realized how the lawlessness of my country could have easily got me that without even going for the driving test. Oh boy, I missed the corrupt system.* Nigerian migrants make use of lexicalization as a strategy to construct negative regrets as regards orderliness abroad versus lawlessness in Nigeria. To do this, the migrants give expressions of lexical items to create an overall attitudinal strategy for the negative portrayal of Nigeria as a lawless and corrupt country. Lexical indexes used to achieve this include: *corrupt system, lawlessness, and easily.*

This negative attitude about Nigeria is expressed by Nigerian migrants to justify their regrets. Lexical items are also used to create an overall attitudinal strategy for a positive portrayal of abroad as orderly and ethical countries. Lexical indexes used to indicate this attitude include *impressed, efficient, strict, procedures* and *ethically*. The reason for this strategy is to create a positive opinion about other countries other than Nigeria to justify why they need to leave Nigeria as a result of lawlessness and why they need to stay abroad as a result of orderliness. While this construction represents Nigeria as a bad country, it, however, represents other countries, especially European countries as good/desirable ones.

Excerpt 9



In the excerpt above, the migrants' claim that they miss Nigeria's lawlessness is a form of paradox. A lawless country is seen as a bad country that good people should not miss. Sarcastically, the migrants claim to miss Nigeria's lawlessness to save Nigeria's face while at the same time focusing exclusively on the negative feature of Nigeria as being a lawless country. The use of this strategy is probably to justify why they leave Nigeria and why abroad is better than Nigeria in terms of obeying law and order. The migrants ironically coin disclaimer strategy this way - ... *the whole thing makes me miss Naija's lawlessness*. While using burden as a strategy to construct negative regrets about leaving Nigeria, the migrants present a premise that is taken for granted that Nigeria is lawless (*the whole thing makes me miss Naija's lawlessness*) and abroad is orderly (*I'm going for my driving test soon*), meaning people do the driving test and pass abroad before they are given driver's license as against what obtains in Nigeria. This negative opinion about Nigeria and positive opinion about abroad is just taken for granted and not verified; it cannot be generalized and it is not sufficient as a reason to believe that Nigeria is truly lawless why abroad is orderly. Lexicalization is used by expressing lexical items to create an overall attitudinal strategy for the negative portrayal of Nigeria based on the opinion of the migrants. The word *lawlessness* depicts that Nigerians do not obey laws and the word *paying* represents the state of corruption in Nigeria, suggesting that people pay to bypass procedures in Nigeria. In an attempt to support their claim with proof, the migrants

use illustration as a strategy by presenting episodic memory as impelling form of empirical proof that Nigeria is lawless (*In Nigeria, we get used to getting around things by paying for it*) and abroad is orderly (*I'm going for my driving test soon and the whole thing makes me miss Naija's lawlessness*).

d. Frustration

This section describes different forms of frustration expressions in Nigerian migrants' use of language while expressing regrets about their migration experience in their online discourses

Excerpt 10

38 Likes 2 Shares

Re: What Are Your Regrets For Leaving Nigeria? by Skyfornia(m): 7:46am On Feb 20, 2020

Mine was out of frustration. I was working back then in a private company owned by one man, I worked diligently and contributed to the progress of the company, but when some money under my custody was stolen, the company mandated me to pay it back, it wasn't easy cause they were deducting 80% of my salary as a means to recover back the money, so I gathered money and paid the rest, resigned from the company and out of annoyance, I decided to travel to Sweden....but I still come back to this shithole after one year. The worst decision ever!

336 Likes 12 Shares

Ikuteyijo, (2012) claims that lack of job opportunities poverty, and corruption force thousands of young Nigerians to leave the country every year in search of better opportunities abroad. This opinion is corroborated by Obi-Ani et al. (2020) that economic adversity, political turmoil, and religious conflict have propelled Nigerians to migrate to economic safe-havens of Europe in their droves. Nigerian migrants deploy the strategy of illustration to achieve this by presenting stories meant to justify the reason for their frustration. Going memory lane, the migrants present impelling form of empirical proof for their frustration from Nigeria which propelled them to opt for the option of leaving the country. The lexical items for frustration expression in Nigerian migrants' narratives include *frustration*, *resigned* and *annoyance*. Besides that these lexical items indicate frustration, they also create an overall attitudinal strategy for negative portrayal of Nigeria based on the migrants' opinion within the context of their frustration.

Excerpt 11

Re: What Are Your Regrets For Leaving Nigeria? by Mancala: 3:54am On Feb 21, 2020

I love and romanticize the Nigeria of my youth. So occasionally, It brings me great sadness to witness from afar the decline, degradation and continuous march to anarchy of my home country. It is a feeling of extreme helplessness, kind of like watching your house burn down on live TV. But then, it dawns on me that even if I was physically present, I would still be very helpless to stop the decay, then I thank God for extracting me from "a burning building" and providing me with the wherewithal to return somewhat infrequently to attempt to pick up from where I left off.

88 Likes 6 Shares

The excerpt above reveals the use of illustration as a strategy used by Nigerian migrants to express their frustration about leaving Nigeria. To express this form of negative regrets using illustration strategy, the migrants give narratives to possibly make their implied claim of frustration plausible by presenting their episodic memory as impelling form of empirical proof that they are frustrated about leaving Nigeria. The illustration is nostalgic as the migrants express the better state of Nigeria (*I love and romanticize the Nigeria of my youth*) before its present state of "collapse". The migrants express that their being abroad has incapacitated them from being able to help prevent Nigeria from total collapse. Some of the lexical items for negative regrets concerning frustration that negatively portrays Nigeria are: *sadness*, *decline*, *degradation*, *anarchy*, *helplessness*, *"a burning building"*.

e. Nigerian Local Foods

Here, linguistic representations of negative regrets about Nigerian local foods which are not easily available to Nigerian migrants abroad are discussed.

Excerpt 12

Re: What Are Your Regrets For Leaving Nigeria? by sweetmelanin(f): 7:29am On Feb 21, 2020

I miss the exotic fruits like udala, ube etc.. but then again, every other nigerian food item is readily available abroad. So, am I really missing much 🍌

Nigerian migrants also express negative regrets about leaving Nigeria concerning some food items they prefer and are relatively easily available in Nigeria and not cheaply available abroad. They express these negative regrets using the discourse strategy of disclaimer. This they achieve by stating that they miss some Nigerian local food varieties to save Nigerian face but still maintain that a lot of other Nigerian food items are readily available abroad. This strategy implies that despite those Nigerian migrants leaving Nigeria for a "better life" abroad, they still have certain desirable Nigerian things they miss in the country. The use of the burden strategy is evident in the excerpt above as the migrants present a premise that is taken for granted as self-evidence and as sufficient reason to accept their conclusion that other Nigerian food items are readily available abroad. This claim (*even other Nigerian food items are readily available abroad.*) that other Nigerian food items are readily available abroad is self-evidence and expressing it by the migrants is not a sufficient reason to accept that it is true.

4. Discussion

The language used by the Nigerian migrants reflects their perceptions of the nation. Apart from the fact that they negatively describe the country in the construction of their regrets, they equally frame the country in different ways, such as hopelessness, bad leadership, corruption, insecurity and economic hardship. Nigerian migrants construct hopelessness as one of the reasons why they leave the country. This is evident in Excerpt 4 when the migrants express a lack of hope in Nigeria even at a later time of their lives when someone might have hoped that things would have been better in Nigeria. The hopelessness is expressed by ending it that it is painful that they will customarily return to Nigeria from abroad. The Nigerian migrants' online discourse for this hopeless expression is presented thus: *My only regret is that in no distant time, I'll be back permanently as customs and traditions demand. Ultimately 'AKA YA EBO OVO' shouldn't stay outside for too long. It's really painful!*

Also discovered in the analysis is the way Nigerian leaders are described as visionless. To implicate that Nigerian leaders are visionless, the migrants express that the governance in Nigeria is moving towards anarchy and one may interpret it that if the leaders are visionary, the country cannot be moving towards the state of anarchy. One of the indexes for this is presented as *the continuous march to the anarchy of my home country*. This issue of lawlessness is expressed to be represented in various ways in Nigeria. One aspect of lawlessness discovered in the findings is that people are lawless by refusing to follow procedures but instead prefer to pay the bribe and collect bribes to jump protocol. The migrants express this by saying: *... This was until I needed a driving license that I realized how the lawlessness of my country could have easily got me that without even going for the driving test*. A similar excerpt to substantiate the contextual framing of lawlessness discovered in the analysis is: *In Nigeria, we get used to getting around things by paying for them*. Bad leadership resulting in bad governance has, over the years, prevented Nigeria from maximizing its endowments for the benefit of its citizens and enhancing positive foreign policy (Anazodo et al. 2015).

Corruption is another frame in Nigerian migrants' use of language for regrets' construction. It is found in their online discourses that both the leaders and the led are corrupt in Nigeria. The migrants sarcastically represent corrupt Nigerian leaders by metaphorically referring to them as "snakes". The context for the understanding of the snakes swallowing millions can be traced to the scenario at Joint Admission and Matriculation Board's headquarters in Abuja in 2017 when one of the officials at the office, as a cover-up for mismanaged money under their care, claimed that snakes have swallowed millions of naira they kept in their office(s). The migrants put the sarcasm contextually representing Nigerians as corrupt thus: *I will miss the snakes swallowing Millions*. It is as well discovered that Nigerians exhibit their corrupt practices by paying bribes to avoid following rules and protocol and to implicate this, the migrants include in their online discourses that: *In Nigeria, we get used to getting around things by paying for it*.

Economic hardship is found in the analysis as the migrants express their regrets for leaving Nigeria implicating that they had to leave Nigeria as a result of economic hardship in the country. Inducing this assertion, they state: *...but when some money under my custody was stolen, the company mandated me to pay it back. It was not easy because they were deducting 80% of my salary as a means to recover back the money*. Another significant contextual framing in the online

discourses of Nigerian migrants while expressing their regrets for leaving Nigeria is that of insecurity in Nigeria which is probably why some Nigerians leave the country and some do not want to return to the country for the same reason. The migrants frame the issue of insecurity by stating that: *It is a feeling of extreme helplessness, kind of like watching your house burn down on live TV. But then, it dawns on me from "a burning building"...* The indexes of *the house burn down* and *burning building* implicate insecurity of lives and properties in Nigeria.

The analysis reflects that a lot of Nigerian migrants leave the country for abroad significantly due to bad leadership in Nigeria which has given birth to corruption, lawlessness, economic hardship, insecurity and hopelessness in the country. This issue of bad leadership in Nigeria has formed a kind of ideology in the mind of an average Nigerian and they also have a belief that an individual way of escaping the problems emanating from bad leadership in Nigeria is to leave the country for any other country where they envisage a better life than what is available to them in Nigeria. These ideologies that Nigeria has bad leadership and that the individual way to escape the problems emanating from the bad leadership in the country is to leave Nigeria are implicatively reflected in the online discourses of Nigerian migrants as they deploy different discourse strategies to express their regrets for leaving the country both positively and negatively.

5. Conclusion

Deploying certain discourse strategies such as presupposition and implication, lexicalization, hyperbole, illustration, metaphor and disclaimer, Nigerian migrants, in their online discourses, make use of linguistic elements to express positive regrets by blaming either themselves, relations or the Nigerian system for not having left Nigeria earlier than they did. They construct negative regrets by expressing what they suffer in their host countries but believed not to suffer in their home country had it been the "Nigerian bad system" that has not "compelled" them to migrate. Validating the reason why a lot of Nigerians opt for the choice of leaving the country, Obi-Ani et al. (2020) submit that economic adversity, political turmoil, and religious conflict have propelled Nigerians to migrate to economic safe-havens of Europe in their droves. Nigerian migrants present their positive regrets (as ways of reflecting that they feel lucky to have left the country) by negatively representing Nigeria in form of genuine insults which Marta (2021) refers to as the insults intended to offend the target (whether or not conveying truthful messages about them). To do this, Nigerian migrants label Nigeria with derogatory tags such as "zoo", "British Game Reserve", "Shithole nation" and "Animal kingdom". The migrants negatively represent Nigeria in form of jocular insults which Marta (2021) refers to as the insults that are creative barbs that are hurled for fun. Nigerian migrants do this by labelling Nigerians in positions of authority (who are believed to be corrupt) with insulting metaphorical terms such as "snakes swallowing Millions".

However, having expressed their regrets using several discourse strategies to implicate that leaving Nigeria is better than remaining there (probably in line with the submission of Ikuteyijo (2012) that lack of job opportunities, poverty, and corruption force thousands of young Nigerians to leave the country every year in search of better opportunities abroad), Nigerian migrants also express their negative regrets about leaving Nigeria by stating certain "things" (Nigerian local foods, affordable services, lawlessness) exclusively in/about Nigeria that they cannot enjoy again since they have left the country. They express these regrets to show that even though there are a lot of things to complain about in Nigeria, there are still certain things Nigerians desire in their country. Resultantly, it can be concluded that Nigerian migrants' regrets about leaving the country project both bad and good sides of Nigeria and the government of Nigeria can explore Nigerian migrants' regrets' expression to probably understand certain areas of concerns in the country which need to be adequately addressed to possibly reduce Nigerians' urge to, "by whatever means," leave the country – to reduce or prevent brain drain in Nigeria. Online discourses of Nigerian migrants where they express their regrets about leaving the country is a relevant information source for other Nigerians who may later plan to leave the country to be properly guided by being aware of what they are likely to miss in Nigeria after leaving and what they are likely to enjoy or suffer abroad.

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